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Florida Agricultural Experiment Station

WINTER PRUNING FOR WITHERTIP

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Withertip is one of the worst fungus diseases of citrus trees in Florida. In the winter season, diseased trees may be distinguished by the yellowing and falling of their leaves, the dropping of their fruit, and the dying of their twigs and branches. A citrus tree affected with withertip will begin to lose its inside leaves. The outer leaves then turn yellow and fall, leaving many bare and discolored branches. The fruit also drops, with or without spotting.

HOW TO PRUNE

The important thing in pruning is to cut out enough of the wood, in order to get rid, not only of the bare branches, but also of all the branches that show even a slight sign of the disease. In severe cases of withertip, there are seen, in addition to bare branches, many limbs on which the yellowish leaves are about to fall. Close examination will show that the disease is slowly making its way back and poisoning these limbs. This poisoning may start from an infection at the tip, or from an infection on a side branch lower down, from which the poisonous effect has spread to the main limb. Sometimes only one side of a tree, or only one branch, is severely affected; while the remaining part of the tree is uninjured. Whatever may be the conditions, it is important to get rid of these poisoned limbs. All limbs that show the beginnings of the disease must be taken out. Drastic measures must be employed, and many bearing limbs may have to be sacrificed. To prune only half-heartedly may make matters worse, rather than better. When pruning, care should be taken to make smooth cuts, usually at the base of a branch or limb, so as not to leave any projecting stubs, in which infection is almost sure to start again. After pruning, paint the larger cut surfaces with carbolineum or pine tar.

The grove should be given unusual care after a severe pruning of this kind. It should be fertilized, so as to bring about a vigorous healthy growth, and to render the trees resistant to further attacks of the fungus.

WHEN TO PRUNE

Winter pruning for withertip should be done between the middle of December and the middle of January. It is important not to delay the work beyond this date. Do not prune while the new growth is putting out, for this is

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almost sure to result in injury rather than benefit. Begin the work at once, and do not consider the looks of the trees, but take out everything that shows the presence of the disease.

The beneficial results already obtained on hundreds of acres of groves treated in this way, under the direction of Experiment Station workers, have proved the effectiveness of this treatment.

OTHER EFFECTS OF WITHERTIP

Different results of the attack of the withertip fungus are seen at other seasons of the year. These vary according to weather conditions and the part of the tree affected, and need different treatment. Some of these effects of the disease are: (1) dropping of bloom; (2) browning of tender leaves; (3) brown spotting of older leaves; (4) spotting of fruit; and (5) tear-staining of fruit.

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